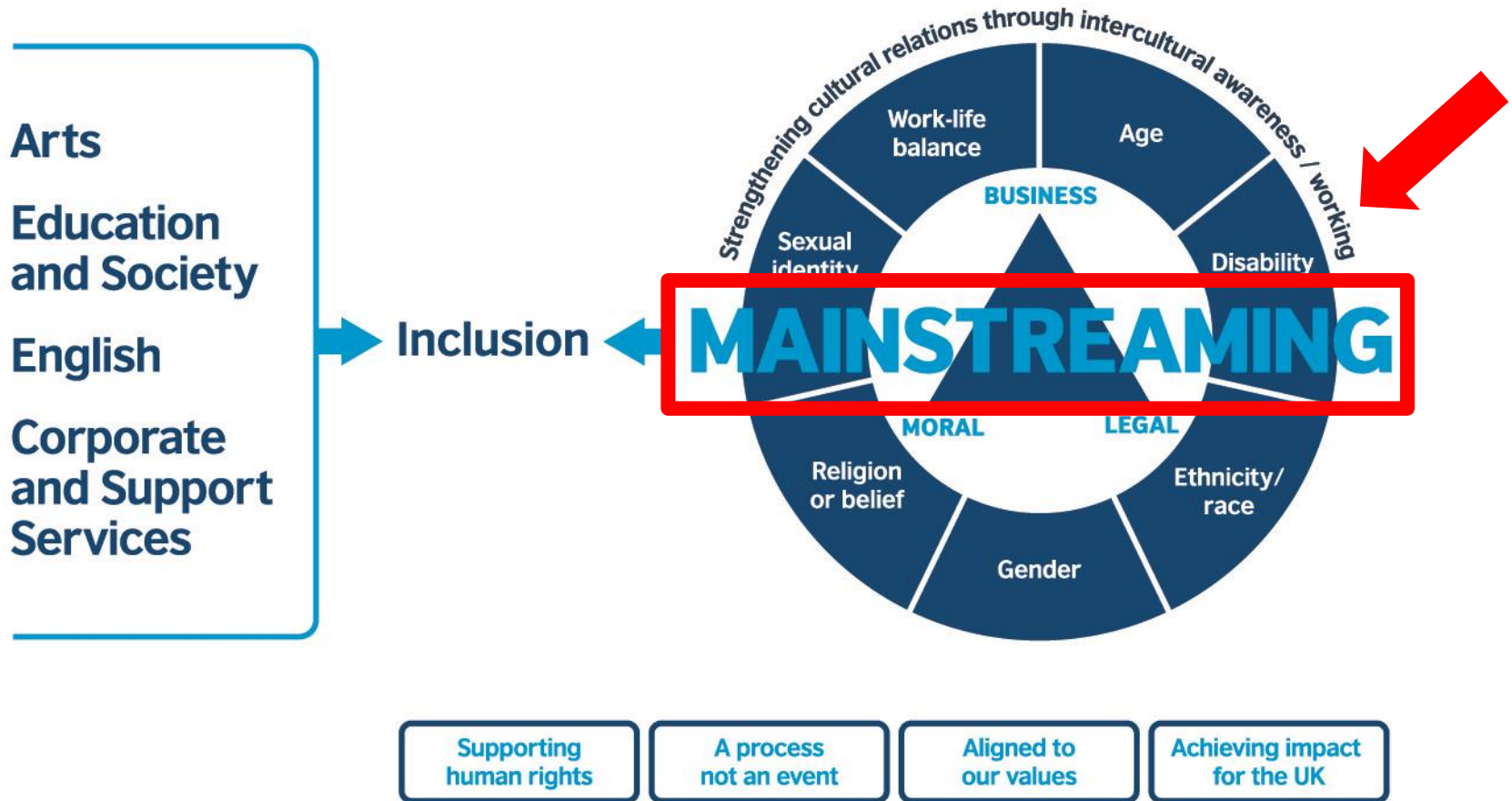


# **Inclusion & Accessibility in British Council Tests**

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# Inclusivity in the British Council



# Theoretical Background

- Growth in opportunities → growth in demand for access to tests (Taylor, 2012)
- Tests need to meet to be legal, moral & **valid**
- Accessibility at heart of validity:
  - “As test developers and test users, therefore, it is our responsibility to provide as complete evidence as possible that **the tests that are used are valid indicators** of the abilities of interest and that these **abilities are appropriate to the intended use.**” (Bachman, 1990)
  - “Fairness is a **fundamental validity issue** and requires attention throughout **all stages of test development** and use” (AERA, 2014)
  - “...no candidate should be discriminated against except in terms of their **ability in the intended construct.**” (Shaw & Weir, 2007)

# Theoretical Background

- Issue of **test bias** (Bachman, 1990; Weir, 2005)
  - Construct irrelevant variance to be avoided
  - Possibility of invalid results
  - Lack of generalisability
- **Centrality of test-takers** & diversity of characteristics (e.g. O’Sullivan & Weir, 2011)
- Three approaches:
  - Universal design
  - Accommodation
  - Modification
- Accommodations in practice - careful balancing act (Carr, 2011; Taylor, 2012)
- Lack of empirical research - decisions based on **professional judgement**:  
“In every case, the exact combination of special arrangements that is most appropriate will need to be determined individually in consultation with the test taker” (Taylor, 2011)

# Issues in Testing Diversity

- Need to **maintain standards** for all test-takers
- Recognising cognitive diversity
- **Limit** to possible accommodations
- Different approaches:
  - Anticipated & reasonable accommodations
  - Administrative adjustments
  - Technological solutions
  - Adapted content
- **Test preparation** materials

# Making tests accessible and inclusive

- Identify **principles**
- **Consult** with relevant advisory bodies & documentation:
  - Internal
  - External
- Maintain **consistency** with current practice elsewhere
- Clear statement of **policy and intent**
- **Documentation** for different audiences & purposes
  - General audience (website)
  - Test takers & customers
  - Test centres/administrators
  - Incorporate in test specifications (for item writers)

# Aptis for All

The British Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in English language testing. We believe that the Aptis test should be accessible to anyone who wants to take it. We also believe that each person should have the opportunity to perform to the best of his or her ability on the Aptis test.

If you have a disability, believe that Aptis is not accessible to you, or believe that the form of the test will not allow you to show your true level of English, please contact your local British Council centre to talk about ways in which the test can be modified for your needs. We can make adjustments such as pen and paper tests, Braille and large font tests, timing, and many others.

Discuss it with us to ensure that we can support you with a test which is both fair to you and maintains the high standards and reliability of Aptis.

# Test design

## Flexible delivery mode

### – **Computer-based**

- Accessible venue (chosen by client)
- Test features controlled by test taker, e.g. listening volume

### – **Tablet** version – test can go to test-taker (e.g. English Impact)

### – **Pen and paper** version – when CBT is not suitable



# Test design (2)

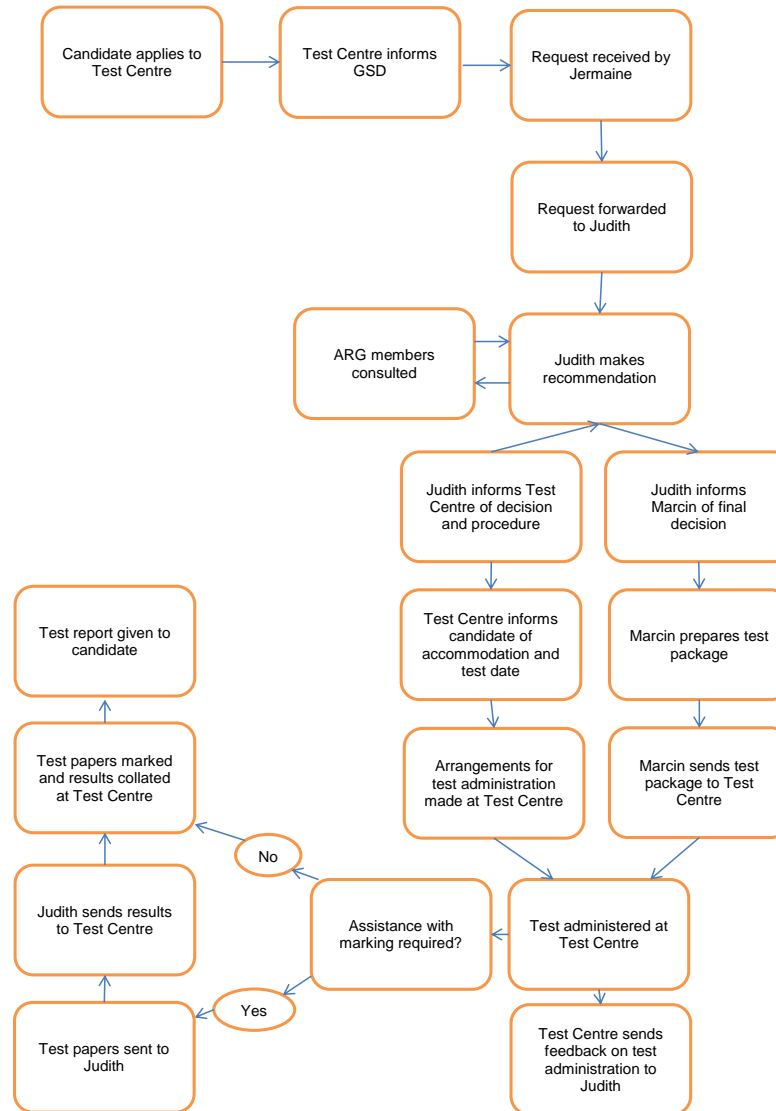
## Test preparation and construction

- Guidelines to **item writers**
- Balanced construction of genders, accents, etc.
- **Quality assurance for *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion* (EDI)**

## Anticipated accommodations

- Range of **accommodations trialled**
- **Adapted tests** (e.g. screen readers) trialled

# Reasonable Accommodations



# Reasonable Accommodations

- **Initiated** by request **from test-taker**
- **Sensitive dialogue** with test-taker
- Considered on case-by-case basis
  - CBT format – screen readers, built-in timings, extra listening plays
  - Pen and paper format – font sizes, layout
  - Scoring – not taking spelling into consideration
  - Other arrangements – Braille
  - Exemption from one skill - but still given an overall CEFR profile

**Continuous learning experience and building case studies**

# APTIS AND EDI CASE STUDIES

## **SPAIN**

Successfully  
piloted a screen  
reading test to a  
blind test taker

## **Singapore**

Aptis tests for  
ADHD and  
dyslexic test  
takers

## **Chile**

33 tests ordered

## **SPAIN**

Adapted  
speaking test  
delivered to a  
blind test taker

# Aptis and EDI Case Studies

Countries	Braille	Large font	Screen reader	Modified test	Test delivery adjustments	Test exemption	Extra time	Disregard spelling	Amanuensis / scribe
Chile	2	13			5	11			3
Colombia	1								
Macedonia					1				
Myanmar		1							
Singapore							5	5	
Spain	1		2	3		2	1		
Tunisia	1								
Ukraine	1								
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

# Feedback from Spain – screen reader

There are many ways we can improve the experience for blind candidates when using reader software. **The screen reader reads everything on the page**, the logo in the header, the webpage in the footer every underscore used to create a blank space where the answer should go etc. When creating these documents in the future we should make sure they only contain the indispensable information.

We will also have to rethink the layout of the vocabulary component as the **screen reader can't read from side to side** therefore the candidate had to scroll up and listen to each sentence on the left and then each word on the right.

The listening went well. He is a C1 level student and therefore only requested to listen to each part once and could retain the possible answers. It **may be more complicated at lower levels.**

I am an experienced speaking examiner therefore I know how to keep to the strict timings which you will hear on the audio file but it would be something to keep in mind for future occasions too.

# Case Study from Chile

- 33 test takers - Pontificia Universidad Católica
- First use of standardised tests at university for disabled students
- Visual, hearing, motor impairment

Accommodations/arrangements made :



- pen and paper
- Increased font size
- Braille
- extra time
- use of scribe
- wheelchair access arrangements
- sign language interpreter (instructions only)

# Feedback from Chile

## Positives

- Excellent support received from Aptis team.
- Student experience – opportunity to sit an English test for first time.
- Accommodation formats, especially:
  - Larger font in A3 format
  - Braille version
  - Scribes for candidates with hearing impairment
  - Sign language interpreter

## Recommendations

- Several requests for test compatibility with JAWS screen-reading software.
- More careful selection of scribes.
- Increase in extra time allowed to be consistent with university in this instance.
- More time to coordinate different accommodations for different needs.



# Conclusions & Future Plans

- Mainstreaming
- Learning value of experience & consultation
- More structured feedback from test takers – e.g. Chile
- Questionnaire to all British Council offices
  - Effectiveness of procedures
  - Cross-cultural differences
  - Communication with test-takers
- Trial screen reader and braille tests with the RNIB
- Impact studies of test-takers & test use

# Thank you!

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# Socio-cognitive Framework - Weir (2005)

